113 821 Nzame has much work in his village, but he does not disdain to enjoy himself. He causes tomtom dances to be performed on the sky, and the noise of the dancers' feet is called thunder. From time to time also, when there is an eclipse, it is Nzame who takes pleasure in frightening people by plunging them into darkness at midday.

776 II. The evur. The evur or evus (plural, bivur) appears to be an individual spirit which plays a fundamental role in the life of the Pahouin. Not all persons have an evur. To have an evur, one must have received it from a person who has one. Such a person is called nem (plural, beyem). A child in the foetal state carried by its mother [69] can receive an evur even without the knowledge of the mother. One can tell by its weight that a newborn has an evur; only a nem, on lifting a child in his arms, can say that he has felt the weight of the evur, imperceptible to anyone else.

776 852 If at its birth a child has no evur, it can then receive one. The evur given it is either good (evur mve) or evil (evur abi).

(1) Good evur. In the case of a good evur, the donor of this evur, who is always an elder of the tribe, comes often to see the child until [856] the latter can count to ten, that is to say, at about seven or eight years of age. At this time the child is considered intelligent enough to understand what is expected of him, and then the ceremony called akaġa is performed.

[824] All the beyem of the village are invited to meet at a tree called ovaṅ (Didelotia africana), chosen from among all the others as the fetish tree because of its size, its longevity, and its resistance to tornadoes. The child is brought there; then the donor of the evur, in the presence of the assembled beyem, pronounces the wishes which he makes for the child's future. He wishes him wealth, strength, success, in general all that which will make him happy. For little girls the wishes are more particularly that they may later have many children, that they may be strong for their planting tasks, and that they may be esteemed by the other wives of their future husbands.

A kind of soup called nam akaġa, the preparation of which is secret, is made on the occasion of this ceremony. Each time the donor of the evur makes a wish, the child must take a little nam. For example, if the wish is for him to have ten wives, this is made with the following words:

e mon ni, nam ma ke we wi oluġ bunega awum
That child, the soup I give you here marries ten wives,

776 852 and he must take ten spoonfuls of soup. Similarly, he will eat a spoonful for each child wished for. As to the other wishes, wealth, strength, courage, esteem, etc., these necessitate eating all that is left in the pot. This large quantity of soup signifies that the wish made is for an immeasurable amount of whatever is desired.

776 The night following the ceremony of akaga, the bivur of the beyem who have been present leave the bodies of their possessors in order to hold an invisible meeting called ngwel. This is the only time that the ngwel does not have a completely malevolent action, since otherwise the bivur never meet except to do evil. The ngwel which follows the akaga confirms the wishes made for the child and promises to protect his evur until it is strong enough; in fact, the evur grows with the child and does not reach its full vitality until the child is an adult. The ngwel [70] also shows the new member what part of the body he must remove from the person he will later sacrifice, in order to make a fetish. This sacrifice is made in gratitude to the bivur who concerned themselves with him during the akaga.

776 784 Every time an evur leaves the body for a ngwel, it is injured and fatigued, and can only be restored with human blood. After the ngwel, which follows the akaga, the bivur who have taken part in this weakened state and, when they have finished attending to the wishes made for the child, they ask the evur of the person who invited them to point out the victim they must eat for their recovery. An old man of the paternal or maternal family is usually designated for this purpose. Lacking such a person, the nem who bestowed the evur may sacrifice himself. If he does not consent, the assembled bivur place a prohibition (eki) on the child. For example, if ten wives have been wishes for him, he is forbidden on pain of death to take an eleventh; or else he is forbidden, always on pain of death, to eat certain foods or to do, or allow such and such a thing to be done. When the prohibition is of little importance, death in case of infraction may be replaced by the good evur transforming into an evil one.

Respect for the prohibitions and faith in their power is so firmly fixed in the minds of all the Pahouins that one who has violated a prohibition of akaga is sure to die, and without external intervention.

784 158 A Protestant missionary of the Samkita station cited to us the case of a twelve-year-old child, a boarding pupil of the mission, who was

forbidden by akaga to eat manioc. He had never eaten any and had lived on bananas. One evening he cooked his bananas in a pot which had been used by other pupils, without having taken the precaution of washing it. During the night he learned that before he had used it, manioc had been cooked in it. Thinking that his bananas might thus have been contaminated by the remains of manioc caught on the edges of the pot and that he had broken his eki, he died in a few hours with horrible suffering, as none of the cares lavished on him was able to alleviate his condition. It is to be noted that none of the children who had eaten the manioc cooked in the pot was ill, and that the one who died was in excellent health up to the moment when he learned that he had broken his eki.

The same missionary also cited to us the case of a woman of the Ngone village, near the station, who had as eki not to be hit on the back. A district guard supervising the work of brush clearance in the village and seeing that she was not working hard enough, gave her a very light tap on the shoulder blade. Immediately the woman started rolling on the ground. She was carried in terror to the mission, eyes rolling, foam at the mouth, muscles contracted, and unable to utter [71] a sound. The missionary, believing this to be an epileptic seizure, tried in vain by every possible means to quiet her. Later when he had heard the story and learned that he was in the presence of a Protestant Christian woman, he explained to her that since she was a Christian the bivur could no longer have power over her, and in any case, if she believed them to be strong enough to make her die, she would not fail to go to hell after death. Was this fear of hell stronger than the ancestral one of the bivur? After long religious exhortations by the missionary, the woman returned to her normal condition.

In order to avoid the eki, the child may give a part of his body to the bivur. At the place where the removal has been performed -- invisible because performed by spirits -- an incurable wound is incurred. But usually, if it is a boy, he gives his testicles to the bivur, who take them and eat them. Only their image remains on the child, and it is this image which everyone takes for reality. In this case the bivur predict for him an accumulation of wealth when this image of the testicles swells.

When the child for whom the bivur worked in the ngwel after the akaga has become a man, and some of the wishes that were made have

776 been realized, he rewards these bivur by giving them a member of his family: father, mother, brother, first wife, first child, or maternal uncle.

776 The person eaten by the bivur dies, and the beneficiary of the akaga must take a portion of the body and keep it all his life. This will be 778 a protecting fetish.

For example, a man has offered his father. When the corpse has rotted in the grave, he goes and extracts a tooth and gives it to the beyem who, at the time of the akaga, had told him to take it. These beyem, or at least those who have not died by this time, meet again under the ovaṅ where they cause an evur to dwell in the tooth and order it to make all its guardian's wishes come true. The wishes made at the time of the akaga are renewed, this time in the form of an order to the evur which takes its place in the tooth. The latter is then given back to its owner who, in order to hide it, swallows it or keeps it enclosed in a box carefully hidden in his hut so that no one sees it, not even his wives or children. Before accomplishing anything at all, he must first speak to the tooth, invoking the evur so that it will come to his aid.

If it is the first wife who has been given to the bivur, the husband removes a piece of frontal bone from the corpse, which receives an evur in the same way as the tooth described above. This bone is placed in a box full of oil, and every time the owner of the fetish appeals to this evur he must anoint his face with the oil in which the bone is soaked. [72]

Sometimes instead of a tooth or a bone, flesh is removed. The removal is then made in the night following the burial. The beyem dry the piece of flesh and incorporate an evur in it. In order to invoke this evur the owner of the fetish must put the piece of dried flesh in his mouth.

The possessor of an evur is forbidden to have any other fetish than that prescribed for him by the akaga.

776 (2) Evil evur. The evil evur, like the good, is given at the moment of birth. It may also come from an evur given the child in its mother's womb with which the nem donor does not concern himself at birth, or from a good evur whose owner has broken a prohibition of the akaga.

There is no akaga for an evil evur.

776 The evil evur concerns itself only with eating people in the course of the ngwel and with waging war against the good bivur. It is almost always the evil evur which is the victor.

(3) Activities of the evur. The manifestations of the evur are many, and itis the evur which acts in everything instead of, and in place of, its owner.

It is essential for one who wishes to be a practitioner to have an evur. Moreover, this profession is assigned to a child, should the occasion arise, at the time of the ceremony of akaġa.

Except in the case of an activity favorable to its owner, or at the time of the akaġa, the evur is always malevolent. The only aim of the ngwel meetings is to assure the life of the bivur through the death of the persons whom they eat.

776 155 824 When the good evur of a nem has worked in full daylight for its owner, the latter falls ill at the same time as his evur. He can be treated only with a thick medication made of water, a cooked egg, and crushed leaves of ebele beyem. Ebele beyem is the name of a poisonous vine whose leaves and blossoms resemble those of the sweet potato.

776 761 The malevolent activity of the evur is always manifested in a death. It may also be the cause of abortion, or the death of a newborn the moment it sees daylight.

776 762 158 The evur also allows its possessor to change himself into an animal. For example, a man who wishes to die causes his evur to go out and take the form of an animal (usually a black antelope, nzip, or a red antelope, nkoġ), and to walk at the edge of the village. The animal is noticed at once by the inhabitants who hunt and kill it. The evur then immediately returns to the man who sent it, and it is the man who is killed instead of the animal. The transformation is simultaneous with the blow which causes death, and it is the man, transported by his evur, who is found dead at the spot where the animal fell. [73]

776 158 An example of this faculty of transformation was reported to us in March, 1934. Two hunters landed on a small island in Lake Mangueigne to hunt a monkey which they had seen in a tree. They separated at the landing spot, after having decided that each should go around the island from his side. One of them saw a large black antelope in the thickets, fired, and when he drew near found his comrade riddled with shot, gasping his last and dying shortly afterwards. The inhabitants of the neighboring village, aroused by the cries, arrived in time to hear

776 158 the victim exonerate the murderer, admitting that what happened was his own fault and that he had changed himself into an antelope so as not to frighten the hunted monkey. Not for an instant did the Pahouin of the district dream of doubting the truth of the story, and each recalled the exploits of the dead man who, thanks to his ability to change himself, had several times lived among gorillas and panthers, whose young he had brought back as proof of his double existence.

In September, 1933, in the village of Ebabara on the Abanga, a woman, Ningone Obame, told us how her husband, Obiang Abugo, transformed into an elephant, killed her little daughter: One day she saw Obiang come into the hut in the form of a bird, and he asked her to give him the little girl to look after him. Ningone refused. To punish her, Obiang caused her to have an abscess on her breast. A few days after this, she went fishing in a side channel of the river, Obiang staying in camp with the child. Suddenly Ningone felt her head get heavy and her heart beat fast. She was frightened and returned to the camp where she found her husband lying asleep. The little daughter was not there. Ningone went out, called her, and suddenly saw her dead, trampled by Obiang in the shape of an elephant. At this point Obiang, the elephant, promised to give her a boy in place of the little girl. Ningone went back to the camp. Obiang was still lying down and continued to sleep. She waked him up and accused him of the death of her daughter. Obiang did not deny it and said he had to kill her so that his own evur would not die. Nevertheless, he died two or three days afterwards.

Ningone told us this story in the presence of all the inhabitants of the village and numerous listeners from neighboring villages, all of whom considered the incident normal and only discussed the question of whether, because of the crime committed by Obiang's evur, Ningone should, or should not, pay back the dowry to her dead husband's family.

778 776 (4) Protection against the bivur. In spite of all the acknowledged power of the evur, the Pahouin seek to protect themselves against it. For this there is an essential fetish called mvul, or byañ bivur. Upon the death of a person suspected of having had an evur which fed upon human blood, the abdomen of the corpse is opened and a search is made for the evur. [74] This, it seems, is like a crab: it has a small mouth with little teeth; its claws form long veins that go into every part of the body. Once the evur is found, its belly is opened, and if it

778 has lived on human flesh, a piece of the flesh is found. That piece
776 of flesh is taken out and put into an antelope horn together with scrapings of a vine called nzi bivur, a panther claw (dze nze), the talon of a sparrow hawk, and a firefly. The end of the horn is closed with the wax of white honey (eko abe).

The fetish thus made is either carried by the person who wishes to protect himself or is hung at the door of the hut. At night, if the bivur wish to enter the hut, the firefly will leave the horn and fly into the hut, giving warning of their approach. Then there is a battle (abal nguel, the war of the ngwel) between the bivur and the horn fetish, from which the fetish almost always emerges victor.

778 III. The bieri. The bieri is a family fetish whose help must be sought before every important undertaking: hunting, fishing, a journey, choice of farm land, etc..., by the head of the family who owns the fetish.

778 824 It consists of the skull of a dead ancestor taken from the grave by a practitioner after the complete disappearance of the flesh. After having taken the skull, the practitioner goes into the forest and makes from the bark of a tree called andun (Berlinia sp.) a cylindrical box with a lid, big enough to hold the skull. The bottom of the box and the top of the lid are formed by a circular disc of wood nailed into the bark cylinder with little pegs of hard wood. The practitioner then cleans the skull and anoints it with an ointment of red wood sawdust (ba) and oil of raphia palm. The box is called nseg and the skull sen bieri, the whole having the name of bieri. Into the box is also placed some red wood sawdust and a plant called nzen (a kind of fern), and sometimes also a little wooden bowl. The bieri thus made is put in a hidden place in the 1687 hut of the family head. It will speak in dreams to a family head whenever it wishes to notify a member of the family of some event. Sometimes a statuette roughly representing the person whose skull constitutes the main part of the fetish is put on the lid of the box. It is called nlu bieri (the head of the bieri).

27 778 781 No one may see the bieri unless he has eaten some alan (Strychnos icaja) in the course of a ceremony called ku melan. The heads of several families send the future initiates to look for roots of alan, of which they retain only the bark. Then in the morning each family head brings his bieri to a place prepared in advance in the bush near the

initiates. Anyone else who eats it will become mortally ill. During the following night, the bieri will reveal to an initiate during his sleep the means of assuring the success of the hunt for which his help has been asked.

The bieri strictly forbids anyone, under pain of mortal illness, to [76] insult it. Its power is unlimited: it can cause a woman who has fled from the village to return to it; it causes lost objects to be found.

In spite of all the faith which the old Pahouin still have in the bieri, in the region which interests us one may say that the majority of the population has abandoned it, primarily because of its being driven out by the Christian missions.

IV. The buiti. The buiti, which our informants told us were of Mitsogho [Mitsogo] or Masango [Missanga?] origin (peoples of the right bank of the N'Gounié), is a protective association against the bivur. The information on this secret society was given us by Akam Eyene, the head of a buiti, who lived in the village Elong Eko on the Abanga. It is rather incomplete because this informant was unwilling to give us certain details and to answer numerous questions.

Possessors of bieri band together because of the fear of the bivur, against which the bieri by itself is powerless to protect them. Their association, the buiti, in its fight against the ngwel, shows itself as stronger and kills the bivur (and consequently the individual possessors of bivur). It also serves to reveal the beyem, who have evil intentions toward members of the buiti and to make their efforts ineffectual.

Every member of the buiti brings a piece of his bieri and a piece of the animal under whose protection he has placed himself. All of these are put in a box and constitute the fetish of the association, which also keeps such material things as:

A musical instrument, ngomi, a harp with eight strings. At the bottom of the resonance chamber of the one belonging to Akam Eyene were pierced three holes covered by three pieces of flesh of chimpanzee, gorilla, snake, elephant, eagle, panther, and rooster. This instrument accompanies the songs of the ceremony.

A bell, etsoge, a round hollowed-out fruit, into which are put little pebbles. It is equipped with a handle and is shaken during the songs.

A branch of raphia palm lying horizontally on two carved stakes called minsaga mi buiti. The whole thing is called obaka. During the ceremonies this branch is beaten with two sticks.

614 issued from the lines which originally constituted them may be separated by great distances or may even be in foreign territory (in Gabon and in Spanish Guinea, for example). Nevertheless, whatever their average size, depending on the location, there remain a few groupings which are imposed on individuals in a specific way: particularly by belonging (one is an Esibil, Esakɔra, etc.) and by "fraternity" (expressed by the title mwananayôg), which they imply. The word ayôg is also used today to designate the clan. This seems to be its true original meaning; it has only taken on the nonspecific meaning to the extent that tribal reality became blurred at the time of recent migrations, resulting in the near disappearance of the word characterizing it (ayɔm). The value of this interpretation becomes obvious when one refers to the observations made by Tessmann, who, at the beginning of the century, pointed out the existence of groupings called ayôg who were more or less united at the higher level to constitute [104] [Fig. 4.] [105] the largest grouping, which he calls "tribe" (ayam). This confusion is significant of the profound upheavals that have occurred and explains the uncertainties shown by Father Trilles in this respect

● 614 776 178 This author, besides, has stressed the existence of a Fang totemism which could be seen [to extend] from the tribe to the individual, and extended out to the various groupings. But he also took care to point out that this was in the process of disappearing at the beginning of the century on the Ogooué and in the coastal regions. A valuable estimate has been made of this fantastic theory by Van Gennep, who writes: "All our efforts to limit the terms totem and totemism to a well-defined category are nonexistent for Father Trilles, who manages to make of the totem the equivalent of the Latin genius or of any other protecting spirit of any individuals or groups whatsoever." (1) We cannot discuss now an absolete

1. A. Van Gennep, L'Etat actuel du problème totémique [The Present State of the Totem Problem], Paris, 1920, p. 35.

quarrel – more especially as rapid changes during the last fifty years have changed or destroyed the elements necessary for any

614 opinion — but we can remember from the facts reported by Father
776 Trilles the indication that a protecting being, a body of religious
178 material (akamayon), a collection of symbols, and a body of beliefs and legends gave a uniformity, other than a genealogical one, to the Fang clans.

614 The agnate lines of descent with a more or less limited num-
621 ber of generations have played, and still play, an important role. Around them are organized the groupings forming the village or village groups which were established by the nomadic groups noted by the first observers. In this respect the history of progressive distribution throughout Gabon is significant. We will give the example of the Yéngwi, of which a fragment represented by twenty-five villages is established in the Oyem region in the Woleu-N'Tem. They are all attached to an ancestor called Esɔnɔ Angɔ, who is said to have come from the legendary place Adża Mbura and to have led the first journeys through the South Cameroons. He is still considered the founder (abial) of the groupings existing today. These, consisting of about 3,300 individuals, are especially concentrated in the southern part of Kyé-Nyé, Canton, north of the Woleu River. Starting from this region where the first Yéngwi villages were established and where a compact nucleus of more than [106] 1,500 individuals is still in existence, a great migration took place in the direction of present-day Spanish Guinea (in to villages) from the mouth of the N'Tem, the Ogooué, and the Gabon. The large grouping thus formed by the lines issued from Esɔnɔ Angɔ and settled at the level of a demarcated region constitutes an abial è bɔt, or major linage. Although these lines are spread out through ten generations, there exist real bonds between members of the grouping, even if their "kinship" goes back to Esɔnɔ Angɔ, and which are sufficient to make possible the aggregation of dissident elements from one village to another.

The word abial implies an idea of localization. It may signify "place of birth," "place of origin." (1) The groupings called

1. Cf. Mgr. L. Martrou, Lexique Fãn-Français [Fang-French Lexicon], Paris, Procure Générale, not dated.

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des Mfang [The Éki of the Fang]," Anthropos, Vol. 1, 1906.

interesting for the last point it brings up; it indicates a test, it shows above all with unquestionable brutality that all power existing outside the clan and the kinship is acquired only after making the more or less symbolic gesture of "killing the kinship." It is by the interplay of [145] such groupings that the logic of the system of kinship and of alliance by marriage is transcended.

"Associations" have a function whose import varies according to particular circumstances. They intervene to create a better cohesion between clan fragments, as is shown by the grouping of [171] initiates at the Bièri (Gabon cult) or at the Ssò (Cameroons cult known to the frontier villages); this at a time when insecurity demands a minimum of union among related villages. In other circumstances, they attempt to reinforce the inherent power of functions whose importance is affirmed: as in the case of groupings that controlled the ancient "dance of justice" (sòmana) at the time when peaceful settlement of conflicts remained the only one possible, and when the role of "peacemaker" was of primary importance. As is shown by the feminine "associations," they may also act as a curb on the domination to which a social group of inferior status is subjected. This is all the more marked as the decay of these groupings has been paralleled by the change in the relations between the sexes. We have pointed out, in connection with the Ngil, that "associations" have acted as the mechanism for higher appeal for the purpose of pacification. We must now stress the fact that some of them assume an almost permanent role of opposition to the social order.

754 Such is the case of the "association" of men known as sorcerers
● 776 (pl. bòyèm), who endeavor to acquire permanently, and in their
782 own personal right, "wealth, strength, and power." Each one has been admitted in terms of an absolute differentiation — the possession of a "spirit" called évu(r) (s) which is physically distinguishable (1) — and with a special initiation, the latter entails the

1. Cf. H. Lavignotte, L'évur, Société

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des Missions Evangéliques, 1947; E. Trézenem, op. cit., II, L'évur, pp. 68-74; M. Briault, op. cit., Captain Maignan, op. cit. We point out that this is a belief which is widely spread throughout South Gabon and as far as the country of the Ba-téké.

obligation to break off (more than symbolically) the ties of kinship and alliance: by the sacrifice of the first child if a woman is in question, and of the maternal uncle if it is a man.

754 776 The évur is received before birth or during the first week following birth. *It transforms the organism of the individual carrying* it since it can be detached at the time of an autopsy: (2)

2. It is described as follows: "It is a beast with paws, eyes, a mouth, and a tongue ... it can travel through the body ....," M. Briault, op. cit.

biologically the possessor (nnèm) and the évur are linked together; the latter "grows with the child and attains its full vitality [146] only when the child becomes an adult." Their respective powers are dependent on each other and demand sacrifices for their preservation. The bond between the two is continually shown by the play of interdicts and special obligations from which the nnèm "cannot free himself." Everything contributes to make the nnèm feel he has a different nature; even the ritual at the time of the two fundamental ceremonies celebrates the "birth" of the new nnèm and his "maturity" which permits the acts of domination. H. Lavignotte writes: "The évur lives in the body of its possessor, allowing him to split himself in two, or rather to leave his body to act in his place, to know the secrets of the other bŏyèm (plural of nnèm) to increase his strength tenfold, to do extraordinary things that will make him rich, to kill without leaving a trace.". E. Trézenem completes this account by specifying: "Except in the case of acting for the benefit of its possessor ... the évur is always

754 harmful."
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Thus we find asserted the use of an uncommon power for strictly personal ends: this power, called sân ngwèl, is that of the évur in action. The characteristics of domination and radical differentiation are emphasized (to the point that the possession of the évur "is indispensable to anyone wishing to be" a magician (1)) in opposition to the system of the relationships of kinship

1. E. Trezenem, op. cit., p. 72.

(implying "fraternity" and a leveling tendency) and of alliance by marriage (implying reciprocity and co-operation). While "associations" such as the Ngil or the Akûm have a licit function, which places them in the heart of the total society, the nnèm as a whole constitute a foreign grouping which is fundamentally heterogeneous and for that reason extremely dangerous. The bonds existing between bôyêm, which become a reality at the moment of the two ceremonies of presentation and initiation, do not exclude competition, for the évur may quarrel among themselves. The quality of being a nnèm liberates the individual to a great extent. It allows him to assert himself against the established order (he can threaten those who maintain it), but it also imposes a near solitude, a state of continual aggression and defense, a dangerous existence, as is shown by the violence of collective reactions at the time of the punishment of sorcerers. (2) The symbols

2. Cf. V. Largeau, op. cit., "... when he is recognized he is burned alive or massacred and eaten."

used and the formula pronounced for the presentation of the évur indicate the hoped-for advantages (glory, wealth, and numerous progeny) but also express the indispensable qualities (virility and courage).

754 [147] These facts reveal a radical form of opposition to the clan system. They represent the most individualizing and

771 The first observers described the Pahouin, especially the Fang,
781 as "less superstitious," "less given to fetishism" than neighboring
114 populations. Trilles and Martrou emphasized their profound religious sentiment, while Allégret (no. 147) gives very interesting information about the feeling of religious destitution they experienced, particularly after contact with Europeans. Often observed also has been the ease with which they would adopt new beliefs and ceremonies, and this refers not only to Christian sects but to cults like bwiti and ngôl and even, before the last war, to freemasonry in the vicinity of Libreville.

All these influences are so intermingled that we must resort to a kind of conjectural palaeontology in order to reconstruct their original beliefs. Without casting any reflection upon the intellectual integrity of observers like Trilles and Martrou, we must recognize—and regret—that a certain professional slant from time to time affected their conclusions, to a point that induces us to turn instead to laymen much less well qualified linguistically, like Largeau, of whom Trilles has shown himself perhaps a little too critical.

a. Concept of God, Creation

776 The Pahouin believe (or used to believe, see later on) in a creator god Mebe'e (Fang, Mebere, Mebeghe), eternal, formerly immanent, becoming infinitely transcendant after the first nsem.

The word Mebe'e seems to be related to the verb be'e, to carry, which has the agent-noun, mbe'e. Mbe'e is a plural form, corresponding to nouns of action and also to the collective plural forms of names of liquids (mendim = water, metyi = blood, meyôm = sperm, etc.). It is usually accompanied by triple apposition: "Mebe'e, Mebe'e menkpwa, sokuma, mbongbwe" (or, according to Trezenem, mba angwe). The meaning of these three qualifiers is as uncertain as that of Mebe'e; menkpwa should probably be connected with kpwaé = to strike down, to judge, to condemn; sokuma with kôm (kum) = to arrange, to direct, sô conveying the idea of generosity, rectitude, balance (Boulou, soso, zoso); mbongbwé would then, according to Grebert, mean "creator of generations" (bo = to make; ngbwé = maternal kinship), but could also be /108/ connected with ngbwa = love, friendship, alliance, with the sense of "he who makes an alliance" or "he who loves."

176 A definition is added to these qualifiers, given by Mebe'e himself in reply to men who asked him what his name was, and reported by Largeau thus, the formula varying slightly in detail according to other writers: Mebe'e me se kôm, ke môt, ke minga, ke nyia, ke ésa, émien étam étam, ke yoo-yoé, a tame mebialé me bôt, which means, more or less, "Mebe'e, with no one, without wife, mother, father, all alone by himself, impenetrable (lit., 'not open,' perhaps in the sense of 'without beginning'), starts the generations."

Largeau gives weight to traditions that run counter to this concept of uniqueness, according to which Mebe'e (he connects the word with a verb meaning "to divide"?) would be none other than the sun and would have begotten man by a union with the female principle Anghe Ndongha, "universal womb" (?). But he himself admits the "vague" nature of these traditions "mumbled by a few old men."

Mebe'e is uncreated and eternal. He declares to the first man: A mon wôm, me se k'asum, me se k'aman, me ne fo'o mbembé, "O my son! I have no beginning (origin), no end, I am in truth he that endures (bembe = to be fixed)."

173 "Feeling lonely by himself," writes Trilles, Mebe'e, "when things were not yet," decides to create man (môt = a person /persona?--Tr./. He creates a lizard out of clay and five days later puts it into a bowl of water (sea water, according to Trilles) where he leaves it for seven full days. On the eighth day he shouts, "Come forth!" Man comes out and gives thanks. Trilles rightly emphasizes the beauty of the scene: Alu mwom ane a nga ke dé'é, nyina: Ku'i! A nga kui, a to môt. Ane, a nga kutubu meboñ, nyina: Abotan. "On the eighth day (lit., the eighth night) then, he goes to look, then: Come forth! (lit., Emerge!). It emerges; it is a man. And he falls on his knees: Thanks! (lit., Praises!)"

This first man is called Nzame or Zambe (Boulou, Zobeyo) or, more accurately, Nzame Mebe'e. According to the tradition reported by Largeau, he gave himself this name at the time he gave the creator the name Mebe'e. According to others, Mebe'e named Nzame. The name may be related to the Fang verb dzame (Boulou, jame), meaning "to leave," "no longer to be concerned with," and also "to forgive a debt," "to pardon." Nzame would thus be "he who pardons" or "he who abandons," the form Zambe used in the north being a dialectal variant or perhaps a passive derivative. Trilles for his part attributes to Nzame the meaning of "the invisible one,"

physically: "His tomb is neither above nor below, neither to the right nor to the left"), he divides his possessions, a division which is disturbed by quarrels, the machinations of younger sons or the negligence of the elder ones. He then departs beyond the river-of-the west, followed by the white men (or the coastal tribes?) who by a ruse have got hold of part of the biôm inherited by the Pahouin. The latter in turn start westward, crossing the Osoe Nnangi, then the niôm adjap (hole in the silk-cotton tree) as described earlier (see p. 19).

Nzame (Zambe) is emphatically not the creator god but the ancestor = mentor; all genealogies go back to him. Yet all the Christian missions have taken his name to express the idea of God. This mistake has come about because the word Mebe'e was rarely spoken, while Nzame turned up in all "salutations," in everything that had to do with the ancestor cult. As the original monitor he could be confused with the creator — in fact, he in a way completed "natural" creation by the magical invention of the arts and crafts. As an ancestor he was solicited in prayers (meya'alan) by his descendants, while Mebe'e was not addressed except on rare occasions—in solemn vows, at initiations. Finally, the very fact of having been misled from the first /110/ made it difficult to go back to the first translation. It may well be though that this mistake, the substitution of the creature for the creator, the deification of man, has not been without influence on the social development of the Pahouin. The Mintangan, who actually came from the niam bekôn, the land of the dead, brought with them a genuine theological revolution, a heresy to which their material wealth gave a sure guarantee. The psychological repercussions must have been considerable.

Nowadays one hears it currently said that "Mebe'e is the old name for Zambe," and the latter seems to be permanently established in his usurped role (1); the traditions connected with the two personages

1. Good, the first American missionary among the Boulou, was nicknamed "Ngôô Zambe," Zambe's ransom, which may have been not merely an approximation of his name.

are inextricably mixed with Christian contributions, to such a degree that we may speak of a new theogony being formed in the syncretist cults and in some Christian schismatic movements.

773 the animal pursuing the ancestors of the Fang in order to devour them, while the legendary history of migration collected in the north shows, on the contrary, the crocodile enabling the tribe to cross the Osoé Nnanga (the python performs this service for the Beti).

776 The observation made by the authors quoted on the "unsuperstitious" character of the Pahouin and of the slight development /113/ of "fetishism" among them is to be related to the almost total absence in their mythology of beings intermediary between God and man, genii or demigods.

771 125 Aside from the bivur, to be discussed in connection with sorcery, there are only the bingungur (Fang) (Boulou, bingôngôt) shown in some legends as kinds of ogres or ghouls haunting forests and attacking travelers. According to another interpretation, these rather are evil animals endowed with intelligence and malevolence beyond that of normal members of their species, perhaps animal sorcerers. The inoffensive aardvark, mvômesila, is thus very much feared; also a sort of very rare Pithecanthropus (Fang, éngure; Boulou, éngu'u) and a mermaid, the mammywôta of the coast, no doubt a lamantin /or manatee/. For Trilles, the éngungure is a "spirit, often transformed into an animal, which sorcers obey"; may there not be a confusion here with the évur (Boulou, évu)?

775 769 As for ghosts, bekôn, it might be said that there are good ones but no nice ones. One may usually get on with the kôn of a properly buried forebear who was respected in his lifetime and even obtain useful services from him, formerly paid for by sacrifices and libations to his skull and often today by candles, Masses, or prayers (I have known Protestants to go to Catholic missionaries for exorcism). There is more difficulty /in dealing/ with the kôn of a sorcerer or with that of a stranger neither whose name nor whose skull is in one's possession.

[772] [777] 266 Lawful /non criminelle/ anthropophagy probably had for an end, among others, that of acquiring power over the bekôn of enemies and perhaps of assimilating the rights they derived from their ancestors. This wartime cannibalism appears to have existed especially on the geographical fringes of the group and particularly along the invasion front, among the Fang proper, the vanguard of the migration. A relative or affinal kin was never eaten, only strangers, and these only by warriors (or sometimes by sons of warriors killed by the enemy). It is worth noting that for the cannibalism of the Fang and Osyéba only the "Gabonese" felt the terror described by all explorers. The

675 784 825 possession. They believe and declare themselves to be really transformed into animals. ...

Finally, when it is not a question of the [sorcerer] in disguise (which is nearly always the case), one often deals with his nagual, obedient to his instructions and prompting, at least in the beginning. After the animal has tasted human flesh [494] it is eager to return of its own accord. I remember that in a village in the interior, a panther had devoured 37 persons within a year. A sorcerer was accused of having the animal under his command and, as a result, after confession he was killed. The next day the panther was found dead in the forest. A coincidence? Perhaps the sorcerer had made use of the panther the first time, but in connection with the other killings, I have my doubts. In any case, this panther had an ear slit by human hand, as I was able to verify. Without passing judgement on the outcome, this was an obvious sign that it was "dedicated."

In their main outlines, the sorcerers' confraternities [sic] are modeled on those of practitioners. Both, therefore, possess two distinct categories of confraternity, or secret society, one set composed of initiates directed and controlled by practitioners and sorcerers, the other composed solely of practitioners or sorcerers.

1. Societies composed of initiates directed by sorcerers each has its totem, as do the similar societies directed by practitioners. This totem is always an animal -- a custom found almost universally and made necessary by the very concept of the totem.

575 784 776 2. Secret societies composed solely of sorcerers do not have totems; they obey a spirit.

[Two paragraphs omitted. --Translator] [495]

[Two paragraphs omitted. --Translator]

This spirit bears the name, engungure. It is also the name of the khun, or ghosts, or even of the souls of the dead after the postmortuary exercises and the final transformations.

779 622 perpetrator. If necessary, the chief would take this upon himself. Such a case has sometimes occurred, according to certain legends.

The large bones are then again placed upon the pyre, for which the necessary wood has been carefully kept, because to cut or to add more is forbidden. When everything has been consumed, the bones and wood that are left in the form of cinders (1) are pulverized as finely as possible, and the chief

[137]

1. Éfirfira is a rather resinous wood, which burns up completely, leaving hardly any cinders.

scatters the powder on the recently covered grave of his father, accompanied by all the heads of family. The banana leaves that had been used to wrap up the victim are carefully folded into a bundle and thrown to the bottom of a spring or stream below the spot where water is usually drawn, so as to avoid profanation.

In contrast to all the other sacrifices, nothing must remain of this victim nor may anyone keep the slightest trace of it.

Before carrying the ashes of the sacrifice to his father's grave, the chief still has to go through another ceremony just as important, the rite of the spear.

779 622 411 The rite of the spear, or better of the assagais, a̍ume mékôn̍, the salute to the assagais, only occurs at the enthronement of tribal chiefs and then only if they have come of age, that is, have already been received as warriors bearing the marks or bawu.

779 ●776 411 171 b) The rite of the spear or the assagais. A̍sume mékôn̍.

From the other side of Africa, Father Van den Burgt, (1)

1. Dictionnaire français-rundi [French-Rundi Dictionary], article, "Kirấna."

of the White Fathers, recently pointed out a curious rite among the Barundi, the rite of the spear, the emblem of Kirấna, the

779 776 411 171

second high spirit. Among the Fan, we have found the same emblem, consecrated to the spirit Ki-ndâña, he also being chief of the lower spirits, of material things, and thus master and chief of all beings on the earth. He is also invoked in time of war. This is the only information I have been able to obtain on the subject. But in comparing this fact with what we have seen among the Barundi, it certainly appears that a totemic rite is involved. Indeed among them, Imana, the Creator, is the lord of departed souls as, among the Fan, Nzame is also the Creator. Consequently he is foremost of all the ancestors and thus the keystone of the whole religious system. The Fan know this perfectly. When discussing genealogies I have already pointed out that a child or any warrior, when asked what his mébara is, will always end by invoking Nzame, saying: "And he (the first of the race) was created by Nzame, and before that I didn't belong to it, neither I nor anyone else." (Nge mur éto (the father of the race) Nzame émiɛn a nga bo ñe, ve 'sim ñí, mê mbe dia ve, ve ma, ve muramure.)

Among the Barundi the great rite of the spear consists of homage rendered to the sacred spear of Kiráña, the higher spirit of the Rundi triad, Imana, Ri-Kiramba, and Riangombi. Among the Fan, Kindâña does not belong to the divine triad, which they also recognize: Nzame, Mébere, Nkwa. Kindâña, lit., victorious Power, is chief of all beings under Nzame, and considered only as the principle of the power that animates everything and that is self-perpetuating. He is the opposite of inert matter. [542]

"The neighboring Pygmies," writes Mgr. Le Roy (1) in

1. Op. cit., p. 314.

connection with this Rundi rite, "have the same ceremony, which they appear to have originated." Perhaps, however, we ought to go further back to the very beginnings of the race, since we find the ceremony also among the Fan.

Among the Barundi the rite of the spear takes place in all critical situations. "The usual form of that spear has one white and one black facet and it is said to bear the spirit Kiráña on its

779 point. At the time of the ceremony the guardian of the spear
●776 appears with two assistants; he wears a sort of crown made of a
411 panther skin, part of which hangs down his back. The participants
171 form a semicircle around him, carrying small hollow calabashes filled with hard seeds (2) that rattle. Then a hymn is begun,

2. The seeds of the annata tree are used or, even more often, the round hard seeds of canna (canna spec.).

sung in an oddly impressive tone, deeply convincing and creating indescribable melancholy. During this evocation, each one picks up a bit of straw, bows down and presents it to the sacred spear, claps his hands together and asks the spirit dwelling on the spearhead for various favors. He then says: "To thee, Father, I make these demands, I offer my homage." Everyone then leaves the hut singing and goes to the resting place of the ancestral spirits.

779 Among the Fan the salute to the spear thus takes place at
622 the enthronement of the chief. After the victim has been divided
411 and eaten, the chief rises and plants his assagai in the earth, point
171 upwards; the point has been made to gleam by thorough careful burnishing. The choice of spear is not unimportant: it must have the totemic tribal emblem incised in its hollow and must have already "drunk" enemy blood. The spear is thus planted in the ground so far as possible just where the altar stood; shortly after, at its foot, the chief places his baldrick usually of leopard-skin, holding the materialized totem, the akaméyôn. [543]

Having done this, he circles around the spear, singing, then picks up the baldrick and hangs it upon the lance, which usually has several small sharp hooks at the base.

The chief again circles the spear, sings a hymn in honor of Kindâña, then stands still. All the others then go to fetch their boxes of ancestral skulls and circle around the spear, singing. As each man passes the chief, he bows, puts his box on the ground, and claps his hands.

At the end of the ceremony the chief removes the spear, puts back the baldrick at his side, and takes everything to his hut.

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

The mariner's compass is entirely unknown, and when I have shown one, it was always spoken of as "the white man's *biang biai*" (canoe fetish). The Fang shapes his course by his knowledge of the river banks; he never ventures more than three days' journey from his own town, and much dislikes the idea of losing sight of land; therefore he seldom, if ever, attempts it. Certain canoes belong to the headman of the village, others to individuals. The canoes do not have houses; charms are frequently tied to the bow, to appease the water spirit, and frequently a traveller in a canoe will throw into the river at certain places he passes portions of his food to appease the local spirit which he believes dwells there. The place where this spirit dwells may be in some large tree or rock on the river bank. At night the canoes are hauled up on the river bank and usually left unprotected. Large war canoes, if painted, are occasionally covered with a few mats. No special portion of a canoe is set apart for a chief, he is usually seated near the bow. Watertight compartments for provisions are not provided, food and articles of trade being carried in high baskets. Upon arrival of a canoe from a neighbouring town, the visitors are frequently welcomed with shouts of joy; guns are fired and a dance given in the evening. I have seen canoes repaired by placing pieces of bark over the leaks inside and outside, the bark being secured with small hard wood plugs. No arrangement is made to prevent leaking.

Hooks for fishing are skilfully made of bamboo, the barb is long, very sharp and notched on both sides. The hook is secured to the fishing-line with string made of pineapple fibre. Foreign-made fish-hooks are now largely used; these are much coveted, and considered a very staple article of trade.

Casting nets are used weighed with stones, iron, or lead, obtained in trade. The meshes are very fine and show much skilful and patient workmanship. A Fang will work well at anything which he can do while sitting in the palaver house. He can then work, smoke and talk; any work requiring much bodily exertion on his part or elsewhere is relegated to his wives. Fish traps are made of split bamboo and much resemble the lobster baskets used by our own fishermen. Small streams are often dammed at high water, the dam being made of split bamboo, fastened together with bush rope until a very large screen is made, 10 or 12 feet in height; this screen is staked across the stream at high water, when the tide falls the water passes readily through, leaving the fish in the river. The most disgusting sight among the Fang, is to see the women and children at low water walking in the mud, breast high, feeling for "mud fish." The large casting net is called *ewot*; a small round net used for dipping in pools and along the river bank at low water is called *tau*.

VI.—*Metallurgy, Fire, Machinery.*

Metallurgy among the Fang is limited to the working of iron. The native word for iron is *Eki*. The Fang among whom I lived did not possess the knowledge of smelting, but I was told that "other Fang far away in the bush, especially the Nqui (dwarfs), dug the *mimbok eki* (stones of iron) out of the earth, melted it, and

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1859 FH9 Fang FH9

so now because I known it's wrong." His latter statement I gave very little credit to. 266

Fang who admitted to me that "bad Fang eat men, but not the people of their town or tribe," asserted that all parts of the body are eaten; that the victims are not considered as sacrifices to any gods, but that the bones are used for *biang* (medicine).

Human flesh does not form part of the regular food of the people, and to a certain extent the natives seem ashamed to admit that "other Fang eat men"; they never admitted to me that any of *their tribe* did so.

XII.—*Religion, Fetish or Biang (medicine).*

These anthropophagi have some idea of God, a superior being, their *Tata* (father) *a bo mam mesue* (he made all things). *Anyambi* is their *tata* and ranks above all other Fang gods, because *a'se pfp* (he is above, *lit.* lives in heaven). The Fang have other or minor gods, the greatest of whom was *Sekôme*, and many Fang say *Sekôme* and *Anyambi* are one and the same god; hence the saying "*Sekôme onpa kôm mam mesue*" (Sekôme he made (arranged) all things). The following is a list of Fang minor gods: 776

Nzame.
Mabeka.
Nkwa.
Sekôme (reported as being Anyambi).
Ube.
Nzame begat Mabeka.
Mabeka begat Nkwa.
Nkwa begat Sekôme.
Sekôme begat Ube.

The Fang have no religion in the generally accepted meaning of the word, for it is mostly made up of an unlimited and disconnected chain of superstitious beliefs. [711]

The key-note of the superstitious beliefs of the Fang is that the Present and Future is filled with innumerable numbers of spiritual beings. The great spirit *Tata* (father) *Anyambi* or *Sekôme* is considered indifferent to the wants and sufferings of men, women and children. I do not believe that worship is directed in any way whatever to the spirits of Present and Future, the natives seeming rather to consider propitiation, exhortation and supplication as the three things most essential and necessary. The spirits of Present and Future possess to a large degree the better human passions, and also the baser ones. The origin of these innumerable spirits of Present and Future is extremely vague: *Anyambi* or *Sekôme* is credited with having created many; others are the souls of dead relatives, still retaining after death human sensations and desires. The Fang have the same

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

idea as the Bulu regarding two great gods. The *Zambe* of the Bulu is the *Anyambi* or *Sekôme* of the Fang, the *tata* or father of all things; and another god of less power than *Anyambi* or *Sekôme*, who lives in the forests and is so tall that he gathers fruit from the highest trees. Some of the old men and women profess to have seen this god of the forests.

Fang superstition includes transmigration; a departed human soul may enter any animal dwelling on top of the earth or in it. There are spirits of health and disease, also a protecting spirit belonging to a clan or tribe, in whose honour a small basket is hung in the palaver house, containing portions of the skull of an albino, whenever obtainable, also portions of the skulls of a relative and a chimpanzee, human hair, nails and bones. This fetish or *biang* is called the *Biang Akamayong*. Most Fang have a cabalistic word assigned to them by the *ngangan* (witch doctor), and this word is used as a prayer. During the new moon, dances are nearly always indulged in, and the songs usually addressed to the spirits of Present and Future. Local spirits need constant propitiation; a native passing in his canoe a spot where a local spirit dwells, as a large rock, will pay his respects by casting a piece of his food into the river, or when in the forest a few stones or a piece of *mbôa* (cassava) is laid at the root of some great tree.

Wooden idols are not plentiful among the Fang tribes living along the rivers; they are seen more in the palaver houses of the bush towns.

Charms.—These may be only cabalistic words, and under this head of vocal charms must be included the incantations of the *ngangan* (witch doctor).

Material charms.—These are by far the most common; the belief in material charms, fetish, occupies the most prominent place in Fang religious contemplation.

Among the Fang, the English word Fetish, from the Portuguese word Feticio, is *Biang* (medicine). A Fang fetish is any material object which the *ngangan* (doctor) has consecrated and made a fit abiding place for a spirit. What may be consecrated? Anything, absolutely anything; a shell, rag, stone, twig of a tree, horns, nails, etc. The horns of small antelope and large deer are filled with resins, nails, human hair, faeces, etc. To bewitch a person it is necessary to give the *ngangan* a piece of the hair, nail, a portion of the food or a drop of blood of the person to be bewitched. A Fang is most careful if he cuts himself to see that only friends and relations approach him until the bleeding has ceased, and hair when cut is usually burnt without delay. As mentioned in the section of this paper on food, every child during infancy is subjected to certain rites which constitute his or her *Eki*, prohibiting the child from eating a certain kind of food or performing a certain act. Thus far, the superstitious beliefs of the Fang and Bulu are precisely similar, and I gathered from Dr. Nassau at Gaboon many facts connected with the people among whom he laboured, the Mpongwe, which showed that they also held superstitious beliefs very nearly, and in some cases precisely similar to those of the Bulu and Fang, the only difference being in the

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

name, the *Ebi* of the Fang being the *Orunda* of the Mpongwe. One day when on a journey among the people, I asked an old headman to share with me a chicken my boy had prepared for supper; the old man seemed pleased at my invitation, but asked the boy if it was a hen or cock fowl. Upon being informed that it was a cock, he declined to eat any of it: that was his *Ebi*. As previously stated, I do not believe the natives worship the spirits of Present and Future, but to a certain degree ancestral worship does exist. A Fang places the skull of his father in a curious receptacle of bark, worshipping it, killing fowls and making blood offerings to it, and in many ways the whole matter somewhat resembles the worshipping at graves and before ancestral tablets as practised in China. The natives often pray to their father's skull before talking a large war palaver, or the purchase of a new woman. As worshipping departed ancestors is the chief duty of a faithful Chinaman, so making offerings and prayers to the departed father's spirit before the skull constitutes the great Fang fetish, or *bieti*. Wooden idols, *biyeme*, of men and women are made in a manner which makes the sex extremely apparent; yet whenever I have seen these figures in towns, the people did not seem to regard them as obscene, but as truthful representations of the sexes. I feel sure that to some extent, at least, phallic worship is practised among the Fang. Spirits are everywhere; in rocks, trees, forests, and streams; in fact, for the Fang, this life is one continual fight against spirits corporal and spiritual.

A peculiar belief regarding dreams is that when a person sleeps the soul often wanders away, and its experiences on these journeys are made known to the sleeper by dreams. After death the soul may inhabit any kind of animal.

Fetish Biang (medicine).—Fetish means anything; leopard teeth, human finger nails, hair, wood, iron, herbs. The article used as *biang* or fetish, has no intrinsic value, it is only valued because of connecting its owner with a spirit which can aid him. The leopard tooth fetish is supposed to impart the bravery of the leopard to its owner. Fetish is a spirit or combination of spirits manifested in material things.

Dili Mkuk.—To murder a person and save his skull as a fetish, or use the skull as medicine to bring women, guns, goats or goods. The people will make offerings to the skulls calling them by the names of persons killed. It is said that these prayers are always answered as desired.

Biang e Soli (hiding medicine).—A man goes and takes leaves of trees, and cuts them up. He says, "I have cut up leaves of trees" (or high grass, bushes). The women shell gourd seeds and mash them. They catch a fowl, kill it, and put it in the pot. They also put in the pot the medicine leaves, and the mashed gourd kernels. They put the pot on the fire, and boil (its contents). When they have boiled it, the medicine is cooked. They take the medicine pot off (the fire). They go and put it by the side of (*afuâ*) the back of the *bieti*. The man who has put it there says to the *bieti*, other people want to kill me. He takes away the medicine pot. He opens the *bieti* basket. He takes a small piece of the bone (instead of this say to the woman and children he takes the excrement of the